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ABSTRACT

A practicum provided child-centered activities for 20 kindergarten children during regular school hours. Goals for the practicum were to: (1) develop literacy; (2) increase social interaction between the teacher and the child through verbal and body language communication which weaves reading and writing into the relationship; and (3) obtain a shared commitment to literacy with the assistance and help of the parents and school staff. Child-centered activities utilizing the regular classroom facility and based upon reading recovery principles were used. Results showed a significant shift in students' attitude and performance towards reading, writing, and language. Results suggest that child-centered activities which wove reading, writing, and language behavior into the learning process developed literacy. The appendix provides three survey forms. (75 references; 8 tables) (SR)

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Developing Literacy Among Kindergarten Children Through the Implementation of Child Centered Activities Based Upon Reading Recovery Principles

by

Maureen D. Landry

Cluster XXXI

A Practicum II Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program
in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1991

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

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This practicum report was submitted by Maureen D. Landry under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

June 8, 1991

Date of Final Approval of Report

Wm. E. Anderson

Dr. William Anderson

Dedicated

to

James J. Dunn, The Magician of my Childhood

and

Joseph F. Landry and Karensa L. Landry, for being the wind beneath my wings.

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ABSTRACT

Developing Literacy Among Kindergarten Children Through the Implementation of Child Centered Activities Based Upon Reading Recovery Principles.
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Descriptors: Literacy/Emergent Literacy/Beginning Reading/ Primary Education/Preschool Education/Language Acquisition/ Teaching Methods/Writing Skills/Reading Literacy/Writing Literacy.

Child Centered Activities were provided for twenty Kindergarten children during the regular school hours. The literature review strongly indicated the need of Kindergarten teachers to assist the poor readers early in the literacy process as well as enriching the good readers through child-centered activities.

The writer's goals were: (1) to develop literacy among Kindergarten children through child-centered activities; (2) to increase social interaction between the teacher and the child through verbal and body language communication which weaves reading and writing into the relationship; and (3) to obtain a shared commitment to literacy with the assistance and help of the parents and school staff. In addressing these goals, the writer implemented child-centered activities that utilized the regular classroom facility and that were based upon reading recovery principles.

The results of the practicum were positive. Analysis of the data suggested that the child-centered activities which weaved reading, writing, and language behavior into the learning process developed literacy among Kindergarten children. A significant shift was found in the students' attitude and performance towards reading, writing and language.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

The area where this practicum took place was a suburb of a large city in the Northeast. The town housed the county seat of government. The area had a tradition of being a typically "blue collar" community, but recent increases in housing costs, the doubling in size of a large teaching hospital, and the electrification of the railroad made the community more attractive to a higher socioeconomic group of people.

The community was located twenty-five miles from a large metropolitan center, and the majority of workers in the area commuted to their places of employment each day. Residents lived ten miles from the ocean beaches and five miles from the sound.

During the past five years three foreign multinational corporations moved into the area, bringing executives and supervisory personnel with them. As a result, many Non-English speaking families now had students in the writer's classroom.

The students of this problem solving process lived in a racially intergrated suburban school district which covered an area of 18 square miles. Approximately 25,581 people lived in this community. Of this total, 96.3 percent of the

population was White, 1.5 percent was Hispanic, 3.5 percent was Portuguese and 1.1 percent was Black. There was three elementary schools, one middle school and one senior high school in the district. Enrollment figures in grades Kindergarten through five as of January, 1988 were: American Indian or Alaskan Native 2%, Black not of Hispanic origin 3%, Portuguese 4%, White 86%, and Hispanic 5%. There was one private elementary school in the district, with classes from one through grade eight, and one private middle and upper school, grades seven through twelve.

Writer's Work Setting & Role

The targeted population for this practicum was 20 Kindergarten children from one elementary school of a public school district. During the regular Kindergarten school day the students followed the regular schedule of language development, art, physical education and music appreciation. The Kindergarten children began class at 8:00 A.M. and were dismissed at 11:00 A.M. At the present time there was very little in the writer's classroom that was conducive to literacy development. However, the writer remedied the situation by establishing a news center, extended and expanded the family center, set up stations for listening and touching area, created a quiet literacy center, set up a writing workshop area and an author's chair. A news letter was sent to each parent asking them to donate a book in their child's honor to the class library on the

occasion of the child's birthday. A VIP of the week was designated so that each child had one week where he or she was the star. Parents and grandparents were invited in during that week. Baby pictures and sequential pictures of the child from birth were displayed. The child was given the opportunity to talk about himself on the classroom "TV".

The writer was a Kindergarten teacher in a suburban school district. She was a permanently certified elementary school teacher with a masters+ degree in reading. She took Berlitz courses in Spanish, and taught for approximately ten years on elementary, secondary and college levels. Her teaching experience was in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York and Virginia. She served on the Governor's Council for Excellence in Education in the state of Virginia.

The writer has served on the District's Science Committee and the Elementary School's Committee on Excellence.

There are two Kindergarten classrooms in the school. The writer's classroom is situated on the first floor of one of the three wings. The classroom is quite large, providing enough room for many learning centers for the children.

In accordance with a state mandate, the Kindergarten children are screened each year during the month of April. Those involved in the screening were:the Kindergarten teachers, a Speech and Language Consultant, a Physical Education teacher, a School Psychologist and a Learning

Specialist. The screening involved testing of children, parent meetings, staff discussions, and student placement.

During the scholastic year, the Kindergarten children usually take three to four trips, such as visiting a farm, a cider mill, etc. The writer shared a teacher's aide with the other Kindergarten teacher.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

While teaching the second grade, the writer observed that a good number of students had made little progress in the reading process. After further investigation, it became evident that the poor readers began to demonstrate poor educational strategies in the early years of schooling, especially during the Kindergarten year.

One year later the writer was assigned to teach one of the Kindergarten classes. She discovered that the Kindergarten teachers did not have a District mandated Literacy Development Activity Guide. The previous teachers utilized systems published to be supplements to a reading program, such as the Alpha Program. One Kindergarten teacher in the school was using a Whole Language approach as a reading program. Research indicated that the Whole Language approach was a philosophy and not to be considered a program.

The writer understood that some teachers tended to take a wait and see attitude or "they will catch up later in the school" concept. The writer believed that a child entering the Kindergarten with poor literacy strategies should be helped so that a failure syndrome did not take hold. The writer also felt that students who had good literacy strategies should be encouraged to develop a joy for

reading and writing during the Kindergarten year.

Simply stated, those Kindergarten students with poor literacy strategies were not receiving appropriate help, and those whose literacy strategies were well-developed were not being given proper enrichment.

Problem Documentation

Toward the end of the first Kindergarten year a Kindergarten teacher, at the writer's request, administered a series of four Diagnostic Surveys (Table I) by Marie Clay (1989) to each one of her students. The results were startling and extremely informative. The tests revealed certain concepts to be learned and/or confusion to be untangled. The value of the tests were diagnostic. The data obtained revealed some evidence of individual reading behavior strengths and weaknesses. But above all, the Diagnostic Surveys provided a framework within which early reading behavior could be explored irrespective of the method of instruction.

The first Diagnostic Survey administered was the Concepts About Print. The results suggested that approximately half of the Kindergarten children may need some form of instruction to help them discover accurate concepts about print.

The second Diagnostic Survey administered was the Letter Identification Survey. The results suggested that a fair number of Kindergarten children may need some form

Table 1 Book Literacy Diagnostic Survey

Student	Concepts about Print		Letter Identification		Ready to Read		Writing Vocabulary	
	R/S	Sta.	R/S	Sta.	R/S	Sta.	R/S	Sta.
A	18	7	54	8	16	7	56	7
B	19	7	52	6	3	4	50	6
C	16	6	53	7	13	6	12	1
D	13	6	53	7	14	6	14	2
E	16	6	46	5	14	6	47	6
F	16	6	41	5	0	2	16	2
G	15	6	52	6	0	2	12	1
H	14	5	51	6	0	2	13	1
I	14	5	52	6	4	4	14	2
J	13	5	51	6	5	4	10	1
K	10	4	47	5	0	2	5	1
L	11	4	48	6	3	1	7	1
M	9	4	43	5	0	2	9	1
N	8	4	42	5	1	3	6	1
O	6	3	23	4	2	4	4	1
P	7	3	20	4	1	3	5	1
Q	5	3	16	4	0	2	4	1
R	2	2	12	4	0	2	3	1
S	4	2	9	4	1	3	2	1
T	3	2	7	3	0	2	2	1

of instruction to help them discover the strategy of distinguishing letters, one from another.

The third Diagnostic Survey administered was the Ready to Read Survey. The results suggested that as many as 80% of the Kindergarten children may be weak in reading high frequency words.

The fourth Diagnostic Survey administered was the Writing Vocabulary Survey. The results suggested that as many as 85% of the Kindergarten children may be weak in writing words letter by letter.

After considering these results, a questionnaire was prepared for parent interviews (Table II). The results were quite revealing. According to the parents, only (30%) responded that their child liked books. Even less (10%) responded that their child spent at least ½ hour per day looking at books. Twenty-five percent said that their child liked to go to the town library. Only (45%) of the parents liked to read. Of these parents, (25%) read at least one hour per day. (45%) of the parents read to their children. However, (65%) stated that they enjoyed telling their children stories. A good number (30%) of the parents spoke another language at home. Of the 20 children only (15%) enjoyed telling stories to other children or parents. Of the 20 children (30%) enjoyed imitating their parents reading stories to others.

The problem, than, was that a good number of Kinder-

Table 2 Parent Questionnaire

	YES	NO	%
1. Does your child like books?	6	14	30%
2. Does your child spend at least ½ hour a day looking at/or reading books?	2	18	10%
3. Does your child like to go to the Library?	4	16	25%
4. Do you as a Parent like to read?	9	11	45%
5. Do you as a Parent spend at least one hour a day reading?	4	16	25%
6. Do you read to your child?	9	11	45%
7. Do you tell your child stories?	13	7	65%
8. Do you speak another language?	6	14	30%
9. Does your child like to tell stories?	3	17	15%
10. Does your child imitate you by reading to other children?	6	14	30%
11. Do both you and your spouse work?	15	5	75%

garten school children lacked reading strategies about concepts in print, sound-letter relationships, word meaning, and vocabulary writing and a certain few students needed enrichment.

Causative Analysis

Whatever we think about the origins of reading difficulties, they did indeed have a large learned component. These reading problems limited success in the learning process. These problems began as soon as the child entered Kindergarten. They will only get worse if untreated.

The Kindergarten child cannot be permitted to begin a pattern of failure in the reading process simply because the educational system did not provide for the systematic observation of reading behaviors as soon as they entered the school system.

Educators have relied too heavily on systematic testing rather than on systematic observation of learning. No where was this more evident than with very young children. Small children often could not put into words what they were doing or thinking. The young child must emerge as a dynamic active participant in the process of becoming a writer. In 1982 Ferreiro and Teberosky demonstrated the various kinds of shifts that occured long before the child entered the specific reading phase called letter-sound relationships. These Mexican and Argentinian children were making discoveries about writing, constructing the writing system,

and making it their own well before they began their actual reading and writing in print.

The parent questionnaire indicated that a high percentage (75%) of both parents were working. Without a doubt much quality time between parents and their children did not take place. It should be noted that in this area both parents must work to survive, placing further stress on the parents and children. Parents should not be blamed for their children's lack of educational preparedness for Kindergarten. They were doing the best they could under very stressful circumstances.

According to research Aman & Singh (1983) and Lyons (1987) and verified by this writer's experience in the field, approximately 15% of children entering the school system had some form of learning difficulties. If these difficulties were not dealt with immediately they would begin to fail in the academic areas from day one. What made this more of a problem was that these academic failures became accumulative. Frustration, anger, and mistrust set in and further impeded the child's learning processes.

In summary, quite a large percentage of children in Kindergarten already began to demonstrate poor literacy development. The good readers were not receiving developmentally appropriate experiences.

Relationship of Problem to the Literature

It was risky to wait and see whether Kindergarten children grew into reading books or caught on later in the school process. This did not mean that an adult agenda should be imposed upon the Kindergarten child. However, the teacher should constantly and systematically take cues from the child. Helping children develop good literacy strategies must be done in a non-invasive manner.

Pinnell et al. (1988) stated clearly and emphatically that is was crucial that all students have access to book literacy in the early years of school. Children who had difficulties in the reading process needed extra time and they needed it in the beginning stages of learning. These researchers stressed early intervention rather than remediation of reading problems. The teachers had to be responsive and flexible. Some students were active learners, the teaching must be action oriented. Learning to read was considered an independent and enjoyable activity. Therefore, the teacher built on the students strengths. Reading behaviors were not seen as a separate entity. There was a definite connection between reading and writing. However, the teacher in both activities placed the focus on meaning and sound-letter relationships.

Marie Clay (1988) stated that as teachers you can understand and help poor readers by observing good readers at the very early stages of learning to read. These

observations must be in great detail and over a long period of time. She found that good readers always focused on meaning and enjoyment. She also noted that good readers worked from the sound in words to the letters representing those sounds. Good readers tended to do things independently using all of the strengths they possess. They did not worry about their weaknesses. However, they did place much emphasis on their abilities. She also noted in her research that good readers are able to look at all of the visual areas of a book and still remain focused on the meaning of the message. This was not the case with poor readers.

Clay further discussed research undertaken to explore the effects of the early intervention program set up by the author in reducing reading failures. The six research projects were (1) the Developmental Project, (2) the Field Trial Research, (3) the One Year Follow-up Research, (4) the Replication Study, (5) the Analysis of Lesson Content, and (6) the Three Year Follow-up. All of the research results indicated that daily individual instruction did produce significant shifts in reading performance.

Genshi (1982) observed that all readers no matter at what age needed to use the meaning, the sentence structure, order cues, size cues, special features of the book, special knowledge for understanding the text, and first and last letter cues before they began to sound out letter

clusters or single letters. For a child to read for meaning he or she must monitor cues from all of these sources. The good reader operated on print in an integrated manner in search for meaning. On the other hand the poor reader operated on a narrow range of sources. The child may resort to memory or pay no attention to visual details. He may be so occupied in trying to guess the word that he lost the message. These unbalanced strategies could become habit forming and automatic. They were very resistant to change and could begin as early as before Kindergarten.

Aman and Singh (1983) in their study found that poor readers did not progress or change their reading behavior without the help of remediation by a teacher. Progress was made while the teacher assisted in the reading process. When the teacher did not assist in developing children's reading strategies, little progress was made.

Anderson et al. (1985) stressed the critical situation of book literacy in the USA. They encouraged school districts and teachers to set up effective reading activities to stop the increase of illiteracy in our country.

Clay (1988) stated that as teachers you could understand and help poor readers by observing the reading behaviors of good readers.

Lyons (1987), Short (1987) and Young et al. (1987) suggested strongly that program developers and teacher implementation will succeed if those involved develop their

ability in behavioral observation of children in the literacy process.

Geeke (1988) identified six teacher concepts that were important in helping children develop good reading strategies: (1) effective reading depended on the student accepting responsibility; (2) effective reading depended on previous knowledge and experiences; (3) effective reading behavior lead to a self-monitoring and self-correcting system; (4) effective teaching depended upon accurate and detailed behavioral observation of students; (5) effective teaching depended upon the quality of interaction with the student and (6) effective teaching depended upon the teacher's understanding of the learning process.

Lyons et al. (1986) discussed the results of a longitudinal study conducted in the Columbia Public Schools to determine the effectiveness of the Reading Recovery Program on a group of 136 at-risk students in the first grade. 73% of the students raised their reading levels to the average levels. Most important these gains were maintained through the end of the third grade without further intervention.

Pinnell and Green (1985) suggested that reading involves messages expressed in language. Children brought to the reading situation a control of oral language. They had control of most sounds, a large vocabulary of words and their meanings, and had acquired strategies for pro-

ducing sentences. The language strategies were extemely important resources in developing good reading competency.

DeFord (1987) stated that helping children in the reading process depended upon the teacher constantly developing his or her own teaching method. Teaching methods in reading was an on-going process. It was constantly changing through one's own teaching experiences and peer interaction.

Pinnell (1987) believed that many poor readers were unable to bridge the gap between their oral language and language in print because of poor reading strategies. The poor reading strategies could be changed with the help of teachers who had developed good observational accuracy. Teachers could not change poor reading strategies if they had not observed how and when they occured.

Engleman (1984) suggested that children developed poor reading strategies because they had not developed letter-sound relationship skills. If a child could decode, he could read. Many present reading programs (Distar, Glass Analysis, etc.) were based upon this reading philosophy.

Strickland and Morrow (1989) stated that there was a new way of thinking in regards to Emergent Literacy. The age range now included children 14 months and younger. Literacy was now considered to be a set of complex activities with social, linguistic and psychological aspects. Literacy was multidimensional and researchers were now studying literacy learning from the child's point of view.

Reading and writing developed at the same time as the child's oral language. The concept that children must be orally fluent before being introduced to literacy had been dropped by most specialists.

The authors stated that there was a fundamental difference between literacy and readiness. In a readiness program the teacher was a facilitator and a transmitter of information. In a literacy program, on the other hand, the teacher spent a great deal of time structuring the environment so that certain experiences did occur.

Dreher and Singer (1989) stated that teachers had been pressured into being managers of a classroom rather than a teacher. They presented an alternative view of the teacher's role. They believed that the interactive instruction was the best model for reading and learning from print. The teacher not only influenced the reader, the text, and the goal, but was also affected by them.

Teale and Sulzby (1987) indicated in their book that reading readiness was a good concept. However, it was applied in an incorrect manner. Examples of this was the stress placed upon perceptual and motor skills which weakly supported reading success. Readiness often times had demonstrated to be a limited concept. Some writers failed to acknowledge the relatedness of the language arts or communication skills to reading readiness.

Clay (1989) described in detail the Concepts about

Print (CAP) and how this test had been applied in other countries of differing languages. Although the test had been translated and tested on children of differing languages and culture, the test results told us that it was a rather good, valid and reliable instrument. She further stated that the CAP did not support any readiness theory, linguistic theory, or language of instruction.

The author described the CAP as a screen into which was projected the immaturity of the control of a child's response. Thus the road to awareness lay within the child and the actions taken by the child. It did not depend upon the teachers words or the type of instruction.

Rasinski (1989) presented an all too frequent occurrence in the educational system. All acknowledge the need of parents involvement in the reading process. However, they had usually been unsuccessful because (1) the school was always the initiator of the program; (2) decisions were always made by the school; (3) most of the reading programs where parents were involved were piece-meal; and (4) in some cases, parent involvment was imposed from outside. The missing ingredients were the active commitment and participation of parents. The author concluded with the recommendation that parents must be included in the conceptualization, planning and implementation of the reading programs.

Mason (1988) examined preschool children's awareness of literacy. The subjects of the study were 18 children

from 2 pre-kindergarten classrooms. The subjects were aked how they were learning when asked to write something. Results indicated that most children were aware of how they learned. Also the subjects' literacy awareness were related to instruction and home support.

Juliebo (1986) described the literacy development of a five-year-old subject. The author described in detail the home environment and the school Kindergarten curriculum and teacher-student interaction. The results of comparing the home literacy experiences with the school, indicated that they differed mainly in terms of content and the nature of the interaction. The literacy of the home was much more a part of life endowed with meaning. However, the literacy of the school was controlled and not placed on a meaningful context. Furthermore, the activities were not varied according to developmental levels. The author concluded that the child's literacy development was more the result of the activities at home than at school.

Hall (1987) focused on the relationship between learning oral and written language. The author described the process children usually follow in a western, print-oriented society. He stressed that emergent literacy was a language process which involved the social and environmental aspects. He strongly believed that children must have a commitment to writing and reading in the home and in the school. He stated that the school must create an environ-

ment in which children could continue their emergent literacy process building upon the strengths and commitment begun in the home.

Hoffman (1986) investigated the emergent literacy process of David prior to entering school. David was read to at every opportunity possible and a diary was kept. He often asked to have the same book read which he eventually committed to memory. While listening, he worked hard to acquire literacy behaviors by questioning, rhyming, panning, and guessing. He learned to use certain phrases from the books in his own play and narrative. He then learned to match the words that he was saying with the print that he saw in the books. He learned comprehension and decoding patterns as he used them and not in a predetermined order. In conclusion, the author stated that reading aloud was not only an important but even a necessary element in the child's learning to read.

In conclusion, the research stressed the importance of early intervention in order to avoid the failure syndrome in regards to books, literacy and reading. The literature also indicated that these children who were ready to read letters, words, or books should be encouraged in acquiring advanced learning strategies. The teachers should apply the following concepts to the reading program: (1) good reading strategies depended upon the child making a commitment to the process. (2) Each child should develop a self-monitoring

and self-correcting system during the reading process. (3) The teacher's ability to help the child in the reading process, depended upon an accurate and detailed and behavioral observation of the student. (4) The child could be helped only if there was developed a warm intense social interaction with the teacher. (5) The teacher must be fully aware of the developmental levels a child usually takes in the literacy and reading processes.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION OF INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goal of this practicum was to develop literacy among Kindergarten children that would provide the specialized learning strategies necessary for the enjoyment and progress in the reading and writing process. The most important challenge for the teacher of reading was to operate on the printed word to get the message. The writer hoped to bring the children, especially those who were at-risk up to the point where they could benefit from child-centered activities and to help them to develop a self-improving system for growth in reading and writing.

Behavioral Objectives

The following specific behavioral objectives were chosen for this practicum:

1. At the end of nine months, 20 Kindergarten school children will increase their concepts about print through the implementation of a teacher-made specialized reading activity.

2. At the end of nine months, 20 Kindergarten school children will increase their sound-letter identification through the implementation of a teacher-made specialized reading activity.

3. At the end of nine months, 20 Kindergarten school children will increase their word meaning through the implementation of a teacher-made specialized reading activity.

4. At the end of nine months, 20 Kindergarten school children will increase vocabulary writing through the implementation of a teacher-made specialized reading activity.

5. At the end of nine months, 20 Kindergarten school children will increase the amount and quality of time spent in reading through the implementation of a teacher-made reading observation survey.

6. At the end of nine months, 20 Kindergarten school children will increase the amount and quality of time spent in writing through the implementation of a teacher-made writing observation survey.

The evaluation tools used were the following surveys:

1. Concept about Print Survey was used to evaluate objective one.

2. Letter Identification Survey was used to evaluate objective two.

3. Ready to Read Word Survey was used to evaluate objective three.

4. Vocabulary Writing Survey was used to evaluate objective four.

5. The teacher-made observation survey was used to evaluate objective five. (Appendix A)

6. The teacher-made observation survey was used to evaluate objective six. (Appendix B)

Measurement of Objectives

The first objective was to be evaluated by tallying the number of concepts about print given for each of the 24 tasks on the specific test mentioned. If the targeted population as a group and individually achieved at least a 10% increase in developing concepts about print, it would be assumed that the objective was met.

The second objective was to be evaluated by tallying the number of sound-letter identifications given for each of the 108 tasks on the specific test mentioned. If the targeted population as a group and individually achieved at least a 10% increase identifying sound-letter relationships, it would be assumed that the objective was met.

The third objective was to be evaluated by tallying the number of words correctly read for each of the 15 words on the specific test mentioned. If the targeted population as a group and individually achieved at least a 10% increase in reading and understanding words, it would be assumed that the objective was met.

The fourth objective was to be evaluated by tallying the number of vocabulary writing tasks performed on the specific test mentioned. If the targeted population as a group and individually achieved at least a 10% increase in vocabulary writing, it would be assumed that the objective was met.

The fifth objective was to be evaluated by tallying

the amount and quality of time spent in reading given for each of the 32 tasks on the specific test mentioned. If the targeted population as a group and individually achieved at least a 10% increase on the amount and quality of time spent in reading, it would be assumed that the objective was met.

The sixth objective was to be evaluated by tallying the amount and quality of time spent in writing given for each of the 25 tasks on the specific test mentioned. If the targeted population as a group and individually achieved at least a 10% increase on the amount and quality of time spent in writing, it would be assumed that the objective was met.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION OF STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

The problem was that some Kindergarten children with poor literacy concepts were not receiving the necessary guidance. They lacked reading and writing strategies about concepts in print and sound-letter relationship when engaged in self directed activities. Those whose literacy concepts were well developed were not receiving proper enrichment.

The writer believed that reading difficulties began in the Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten years, and educators should address the problems before they become habit forming.

Peck, McCaig and Sapp (1988) discussed four controversial issues: entry age, testing, curriculum, and length of day. The authors suggested that resource and energy should be focused on offering a good early childhood program that was flexible, based on principles of child development. They further stated that self-directed activities greatly promoted the learning process. Finally, a longer Kindergarten day may be more productive in helping the child toward a more positive literacy development.

Bredekamp (1987) believed that every Kindergarten child should have access to a placement that fits the developmental level of the student, through valid and reliable testing. The author stressed the need for well trained

teachers.

Clymer, Indrisano, Johnson, Pearson and Venezky (1982) published a Kindergarten Reading Readiness Program based on the concept that reading could be divided into six parts: shapes and colors; visual discrimination; auditory discrimination; vocabulary; comprehension; and life and study skills. The program saw reading as a number of mechanical skills that children must learn separately in order to become a good reader.

Clay (1985) stated that children began to read utilizing four different areas of learning. Language was placed first because the meanings contained in print were usually of high quality especially if the reader had experience about the topic. Language had two powerful bases for reading prediction: (1) meaning and (2) sentence structure. Secondly, the spelling patterns of letters or clusters rather than the letter-sound relationships assisted reading. Thirdly, visual cues were basic and almost automatic for good readers. The beginning reader must discover for himself how to scan and analyze print to locate cues and features that distinguish between letter and words. Fourthly, the sound sequence in words were also used in rapid reading. This process required the coordination of sounds in sequence and left to right sequence.

As the result of these concepts, the author implemented a reading recovery program that stressed early intervention, sensitive observation of reading behavior, and early de-

tection of reading difficulties.

The same author also developed the six diagnostic surveys which would enable teachers to develop reading behaviors of each child. These surveys were (1) Book Level Survey, (2) Reading Vocabulary Survey, (3) Concepts about Print Survey, (4) Letter Identification Survey, (5) Writing Vocabulary Survey, and (6) Dictation Survey.

A number of School Districts had been utilizing a Distar Program by Engelman (1987) as their reading program for the Kindergarten level. The authors stressed the phonetic approach to reading. It was a total letter-sound approach toward letters and words, constant repetition with little focus on meaning. It could be called a Total Decoding Approach. It stressed the reading mechanics of decoding.

Smith (1990) gave some recommendations for the involvement of parents in developing reading language and communication skills of their children. Try to have parents read aloud to their children, to listen to their children read, and to sign their homework papers. Teachers should ask parents to come into the classroom to see how the teacher and children interact together.

Fagan (1989) discussed the fact that some children entered the school with considerable power over print. The author pointed out that teachers must capitalize on these strengths. Teachers who saw reading or writing as merely word sounding and spelling may confuse children so that they begin to feel powerless in school. Teachers should do

less telling, describing and explaining. On the contrary, the teacher should ask them to tell, describe and explain.

Strickland and Morrow (1989) stated that any solution to the literacy problems among young children must include interactive experiences with storybook reading and dialogue. Through listening, the children developed comprehension and language patterns. They learned to associate reading with pleasure. They even imitated certain models of reading structure. The authors, then, suggested the use of the directed listening-thinking activity approach (DLTA). The approach included (1) preparing children for listening with questions and discussion, (2) read the story so that the children can react, make comments, or ask questions, and (3) guided discussion after the reading.

Pikulski (1988) discussed the term emergent literacy. He considered the concept as a philosophy rather than a specific approach. He did not think that the term was synonymous with reading readiness. However, he did feel that emergent literacy was a substitute, that is, a step forward in our way of thinking about the acquisition of reading. In conclusion, he stated that an excellent Kindergarten instruction related to literacy would provide many opportunities for children to interact successfully with the printed word.

Weir (1989) examined current opinion about the best way to enhance understanding about print and the implication

for literacy instruction.

Two different instructional approaches were identified. One believed that learning to read results as a consequence of the mastery of individual skills, such as letter and word sound relationships and matching. The second approach was based on the belief that during literacy acquisition, strategies in reading, listening, speaking, and writing developed at the same time. The author encouraged the adoption of the second approach.

Such an approach was holistic. The total language approach was effective in promoting visual awareness and analytical awareness necessary in the reading process.

Although the author encouraged the emerging literacy approach, he still insisted that the reading skills should not be ignored.

Peck (1989) was a professional storyteller. She believed that storytelling offered two distinct learning situations for children: (1) the student developed a number of effective and critical listening skills. (2) The student as the teller developed oral and written expression.

Moran (1988) stressed the importance of connecting student to writing and literature. Certain strategies were suggested, such as, connecting the child to previous experience, connecting verbal and written language, and connecting children to literature print and writing. Teachers could make these important connections by labeling classroom

items; using a message board and sign-in sheets; reading aloud the calendar, weather chart and daily schedules; reading aloud in class; etc.

Dobson (1988) investigated the progress of the reading and writing of 18 inner-city children, through Kindergarten and first grade. In a classroom conducive to language learning, the children were asked to read and write anyway they desired. The results indicated that the children developed strategies in reading and writing which were transferred in both directions.

Lundsteen (1986) argued that a teacher can build instruction on what the child already knew about oral language, reading and writing if they utilized a developmental perspective. The focus must be on experience rather than on isolated skills. Children can give teachers insights for instructional methods. The author believed that children often start writing without formal instruction. Children's writing needed to be responded to within the children's own social context of oral language and art.

Larrick (1987) attributed much of the reading problems of young children to an overemphasis on the mechanics of reading. Too many educators began with reading and decoding of fragments, which appealed neither to the intellect nor to the emotions. It was time that educators began teaching of reading through trade books instead of the back-step approach of the basals.

Research now indicated that the more children were exposed to books at an early age the better would be their reading competency.

Clay (1988) believed that parents and teachers should let the children lead. Adults should give encouragement without taking over. Adults should be a model of correctness without mentioning it. It was important to let the child retain independence. Progress in writing depended more upon conceptual understanding rather than good writing or mastering the alphabet.

Weiss et al. (1988) studied 110 Kindergarten children between the ages of 5 and 6 enrolled in 6 self-contained classrooms. Each child was shown reading materials in a group of three items and asked to identify one of them. When a child identified an item correctly the subject was asked to tell why people read it. The results indicated that in general, children were aware of the function of print.

The educational implication of this study suggested that understanding why people read was a logical pre-requisite for learning how to read.

Moore et al. (1990) discussed Marlyn Jager Adams' exploration about recent research in the area of beginning readers. One of the most noteworthy concepts found in the book was that letter naming and phonological ability were generally achieved through real reading and writing. When

educators devoid these skills from reading and writing, rapid progress was not made.

She concluded her book by arguing for a balanced approach to reading and writing.

Throne (1988) gave some excellent suggestions for teaching Kindergarteners a love for reading. Children should be stimulated rather than controlled in the learning process. Children needed to be given the opportunities for creative expression, discovery, and critical thinking. Hearing and discussing stories from parents early in life helped the child move beyond his or her own perspective and should be considered as essential parts of language and literacy development. Reading for meaning should be emphazied from the beginning. Children should learn to behave like readers before they actually read. Kindergarteners had the ability to acquire reading concepts and strategies. They did not have to rely on readiness activities. Only children's literature of the best quality led children to higher levels of reading concepts and strategies. Writing gave children another entrance into the world of reading. Oral language was an important part of reading and writing because it was the child's first learned process of communication and thinking.

Anderson (1988) gave some sage advise for effective teaching of young children. The teachers should focus on the child's strengths through careful and systematic

observation of the child's experiences with print. Young children needed many opportunities to explore with a pencil as well as with the written word and oral language development. Patterned trade books that were graduated in difficulty should be the major reading materials used. Finally, the teacher should focus on what the child was doing and it's implication toward an appropriate response.

Pinnell (1986) stated that failures in reading which began on the Kindergarten level continued to have difficulties throughout their entire schooling. This situation could be changed for some children if intervention took place in the early years of literacy development.

The author made a strong case for the teacher and the child to carry on a continuous and intimate conversation which weaved reading and writing into the social relationship between the two. The social relationship established will support the development of literacy. It was also very necessary that the teacher analyzed the social relationship in detail in order to determine the subtle messages about reading which may or may not be communicated to the child. Children at-risk were especially vulnerable to these subtle messages. As a result they might not develop good reading strategies.

The author felt that successful intervention at an early age could only be accomplished if the teacher had integrated theory with practice. This new approach was in

sharp contrast to recipes and teacher proof materials utilized for the past two decades.

DeFord (1985) stressed the concept that the teacher was and important factor related to success in learning to read, especially in the early years of schooling. However, studies exploring the teachers theoretical orientation had not been too successful. The author set out in this study to validate an instrument for examining a Teachers Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP). The targeted samplings were 90 teachers of known theoretical orientation. The judges compared their responses from three aspects in the reading process: phonics, vocabulary skills, and whole language. Finally, 14 teachers were observed by trained observers who in turn predicted the teachers responses on the TORP. The instrument was proven reliable and valid for discriminating teachers about their reading theoretical orientation.

Since each school created its own unique approach to reading development, this instrument could prove invaluable. The disharmony that could result if a number of teachers in a given school held divergent points of view would be extremely detrimental to the staff and especially to the children learning to read. The most constructive use of the TORP instrument would be to help teachers examine the assumptions they hold and make their reading instruction consistent and effective as possible.

Pinnell et al. (1986) stated that one of the main goals of every school was to obtain the assistance and help of the entire community. The school and its teachers could not function at its maximum isolated from the parents of that community. The children's language and literacy growth demanded a constant communication between the teacher and the parent and teacher colleagues.

The author offered four steps to create a shared language with each group of our community, especially the parents. Step 1. Every teacher must develop a "sense of audience" when communicating with a parent or child. This "sense of audience" must be conveyed not only by verbal language but also through body language. Step 2. Every form of communication with a parent or child would differ depending on their frame of reference. Frames of references were never static. It was influenced by changes in such factors as role and situation. The teacher must always be aware of these changes. The concept of frame of reference was a potentially powerful resource for a teacher in helping children develop literacy strategies. Step 3. Beware of using educational jargon with parents and children. Step 4. Communication about any educational reading project must involve and identify all audience levels within the school.

In summary, the review of literature stressed the importance of helping the poor reader early in the literacy process, as well as enriching the good readers. Failure

and boredom must not be allowed to begin early in a child's school life. The most effective teacher was one who could integrate reading and writing theories with practice. Once the integration had taken place, the teacher and the children would be able to carry on verbal and body language communication which weaved reading and writing into the social relationship. Finally, the teacher must also include the parents, the community, and the school staff, so that there was always in place, a united consorted effort to improve every child's reading behavior.

In conclusion, the review of the literature showed the importance of early intervention in the reading process. The earlier children developed good reading behaviors the greater chance they had in feeling good about themselves and avoiding academic failure due to poor learning strategies. The reading philosophy and instruction styles produced by Marie Clay showed the best results.

Description of Selected Solution

The solutions for developing literacy among Kindergarten children were based on reading recovery principles of Marie Clay. The literacy program therefore, must be organized, developmental, with emphasis on child-centered activities in oral language, reading, and writing.

The classroom was set up into various activity centers such as a listening center, a quiet reading place (drop everything and read time), the writing workshop, author's

chair, Channel 117 TV Station, Mama Ida's Kitchen, the family area, and a hands on science station. The teacher developed lesson plans based on the following recovery principles: (1) children should be stimulated rather than controlled; (2) hearing and discussing trade books with emphases on reading for meaning was extremely important; (3) writing activities must always be connected with reading; (4) always focus on the child's strengths through careful and systematic observation of the child's experiences with print; and (5) parental involvement in the process was essential for language and literacy development.

The areas from which the child-centered activities were selected tended to increase student motivation and participation. The activities chosen for the eight months were; September: Me, Myself & I and the Family, October: Fall and the harvest, November: Indians and Thanksgiving, December: Hanukkah and Christmas, January: Winter and Martin Luther King Jr., February: Ground Hog Day, Abraham Lincoln's Birthday, Valentines Day and George Washington's Birthday, March: The Five Senses and Spring, April: Community Helpers.

The Diagnostic Surveys of Marie Clay were used to ascertain the children's various reading behaviors on the four areas of Concepts about Print, Letter Identification, Reading Vocabulary, and Writing Vocabulary.

Concepts about Print Surveys were entitled Sand (Clay, 1972), and Stones (Clay, 1972). The survey proved to be sensitive to children's behaviors during the reading

process. Also the test captured changes over time which supported reading acquisition. There was 24 items in the survey. The test-retest reliability coefficients ranged from 0.73 to 0.89. Validity was demonstrated by a correlation with word reading for 100 children at six years old, 0.79.

The Ready to Read Word Survey had word list A, B and C, which can be administered in two minutes. Each list contained 15 words. The reliability was .90 and the validity was demonstrated with a correlation of .90.

The Letter Identification Survey contains 54 letters of both the upper and lower case. The survey can be administered in from 5 to 10 minutes. The child may respond correctly by naming the letter, giving the sound of the letter or giving the word for which the letter is the initial letter. The split half reliability was .97. Validity was shown by a correlation of .85.

The Writing Survey was considered to be a good indicator of a child's knowledge of letters and of a left to right sequencing behavior. The child was asked to write as many words as he/she could. The child was given 10 minutes to perform this task. The test-retest reliability was .97. Validity was demonstrated by means of a correlation with reading of .82.

The two teacher-made observation records for self-directed reading and writing activity were used to evaluate the amount and quality of reading and writing that the

children did on their own initiative. Activities were not truly "child centered" unless children were given the opportunities to read and write on their own with books and topics of their own choice. Careful and systematic observation under these circumstances best demonstrated the extent to which the solution strategies had been effective.

The writer believed that the program worked because of her experience as a teacher on the Kindergarten level. Most, if not all of the Kindergarten children were given the opportunity to discover accurate concepts and strategies for early literacy development. Early intervention was one way to stop the development of poor reading and writing strategies. Children did not mature into reading and writing. They must acquire the necessary educational strategies in the reading and writing process. It appeared to the writer that students failed in the reading and writing process simply because they were deprived of appropiate support for early literacy development when they most needed it (i.e. in the early school years).

The approach to word based upon Reading Recovery principles had high success rates in bringing about positive changes in reading and writing behaviors of young children. Meek (1982) indicated in his research that children act like readers long before they learn to read. Graves' (1983) study demonstrated that young children can express their own ideas through writing. Children should be encouraged to

choose and express themselves through art, writing messages, listening to stories, making signs, etc. Dictation, pretend writing, and invented spelling were all part of the process of learning to write.

In summary, the parents and the school staff recognized the merits and needs of the child-centered activities based on reading recovery principles in the Kindergarten classroom. The literature search provided many ideas for the program activities and evaluation. The solution ensured the Kindergarten children the opportunity to develop literacy in reading, writing and oral language and at the same time become an active, dynamic participant of the academic and social interactions of the entire classroom processes.

Report of Action Taken

The solution used in the practicum involved twenty Kindergarten children. The implementation of the program ran for a period on nine months. The students ranged from age 5.0 to 5.4 and were of different ability levels.

Prior to beginning the implementation procedure, the writer had individual meetings with the parents and child. At these meetings the parent questionnaire (Appendix C) was filled out. Also the parents were informed that during the year every child who gave the teacher a written message or drawing, would immediately receive a response in writing in the shape of whatever unit was being covered. For example: a Christmas tree during the month of December, a bunny

rabbit during the month of April, etc.

In the month of July, the writer sent a postcard to each of the targeted children. Each card had a special written message unique to each child. On the first day of class each student brought in their teacher's postcard. As a result of this procedure, none of the children demonstrated school phobia. They also saw their Kindergarten classroom as part of their own family surroundings. Their teacher had become a respected family member.

The solution strategy began August 20, 1990 through May 20, 1991. One teacher aide under the supervision of the certified classroom teacher administered all of the pre and post testing. The certified classroom teacher prepared and implemented the lesson child-centered activities, the parent meetings and an early childhood newsletter . The newsletter was written in order to help the parents participate in the school activities and contained suggestions for the parents on how to help their child at home.

During the pre-testing phase each child was tested individually by the teachers' aide under the supervision of the certified teacher. The surveys administered were in the following order: Concepts about Print, Letter Identification Survey, Ready to Read Survey, Vocabulary Writing Survey, The Teacher-Made Observation Survey of Reading, and the Teacher-Made Observation Survey of Writing. The tester wrote down the subjects answers according to the scoring criteria for each of the surveys.

A workshop was held for the teacher's aide. The main thrust of the workshop was the child-centered activities concept. The teacher explained in detail the implications for literacy instruction. During literacy acquisition each child developed strategies in reading, listening, speaking and writing. All of these strategies developed at the same time. It was important that the aide be a facilitator. Let the children lead, was the motto of the workshop. It was important to let the child retain independence during this critical developmental stage.

The implementation of the curriculum child-centered activities began on September 5, 1990 after construction of the tasks and lesson plans. The lesson plans were developed by the teacher, a school psychologist, and a reading specialist in early childhood literacy.

The center was set up for the purpose of applying certain reading recovery principles gleemed from the most recent literature research for developing literacy among Kindergarten children.

First and foremost the writer set up centers where the children had the opportunity to demonstrate their levels of learning strategy by choosing their own activities. Self-directed activities gave the child a positive feeling of self worth, encouraged the student to follow his/her own natural curiosity, increased a search for social reciprocity, become alert to the environment, felt free to develop

learning spontaneously, developed a willingness to take risks, became motivated to excell, and increased their ability to focus on task.

The theme approach was the integration of child-centered activities around a control concept. One of the benefits found by the teacher was the high interest showing among all of the children. The unit approach enabled the teacher to weave reading, writing, and language strategies into every aspect of the days activities.

For the first month of the implementation, the teacher set in motion the family and self-concept themes by informing the students about the new family center area in the classroom. It was to be one of the most active centers of the classroom. Each student with his or her family was made the VIP for one week. Pictures of the student as a baby, toddler, and present day were displayed on the VIP board. The VIP student was first in line throughout the week. He/she was always called first for snack time. A special VIP button was worn throughout the week. The Wednesday of the VIP week was the highlight for the student. On this day, the family and relatives of the VIP were invited to talk about their child. To the surprise of the writer the panel discussion that took place between the family and the children was so interesting that the allotted 15 minutes became thirty minutes. During the panel discussion, the VIP student sat in a special VIP chair. Some of the

questions asked were: "What kind of punishment do the parents give when he/she did something wrong?" "Do you take the student out to restaurants?" "What kind of food do you cook?" "What was a paella?" "Do you have any pet animals?" "What was it like living in Brazil, Portugal, Japan, China, India, etc.?" The parents of the first VIP students made cupcakes and brought along juice for a small party snack which set a precedent for the other VIP parents. During the writing workshop time, the children were asked to write a booklet about the VIP person and his/her family using drawings, creative spelling, and pretend writing. The booklets were then laminated and given to the VIP child for keep-sake.

The VIP program created a bond between the parents, the children, the community, and the school staff. One parent cancelled an important business trip in order to be present for his son's VIP week. Some parents took video's of the panel discussion and showed it to their neighbors and community organizations. One group of grandparents changed their vacation trip just to be part of the VIP week of their granddaughter.

The lesson theme for the second month was about the events of Fall. In the reading center all types of Fall books were on display. The Drop Everything and Read Time (DEAR TIME) took place every day between 8:30 to 8:45. Anyone who came into the classroom during that time could

not interrupt the teacher or the students and had to participate by reading a book. There were large and small books, magazines of all kinds, toy catalogues, comic books, pictionaries, and booklets that the children wrote. In the beginning of the year the children were fidigty and had difficulty remaining seated. Once a week a reading form noting the books their child read were sent home for the parents' signature. Today the children were more intent on reading, demonstrated more focusing on the words and their meanings, and enjoyed the reading activity time. At the end of a recent DEAR Time, Chris came up to the teacher and said that he was able to read. "You see this book, it says where is the bear. On page two there is a picture of a bear in the forest and it says where is the bear, etc. You see, if you know the words on the cover, you can read the whole book. Now that I can read, I can skip first grade."

During the third month, the students participated in many preparations for Thanksgiving. Mama Ida's Kitchen opened its doors to the hustle and bustle of twenty enthusiastic children and some of their parents. Through these activities of preparing an entire Thanksgiving dinner (turkey, gravy, cranberry sauce, homemade butter and cornbread) the children learned reading, writing and language strategies with motivation and enjoyment. In Ida's Restaurant, the children helped make cupcakes for Halloween, Christmas tree cookies for Christmas, bunny cakes for Easter, Irish soda bread and jello shamrocks for St. Patrick's Day. For Seed

Planting Day, the children dug in to make the famous Dirt Cake. The winter picnic was a treat. They made homemade soup and special bread to go with it.

The month of December was a special occasion. Almost all of the children heard the stories and festivals of Christmas, but very few knew anything about Hanukkah. On the first day of December the children who volunteered entered the classroom TV station channel 117 to announce the special events of the month. The month of December was very special because for the first time all of the children asked to speak from the TV station with the exception of a shy, pretty Portuguese girl. The teacher had noticed that Susana longed to enter the TV station but could not get herself to do it. She loved to hear the other children tell about special events, birthdays, the first snow fall, the birth of a sibling. One morning in December while all of the children were seated during their snack time, Susana walked over to the teacher, pointed to the TV station and said in a clear voice "I go too". All the students were amazed and watched as she walked proudly to the booth, open the door, turned on the light and announced "I am going to play at Peter's house for the first time." At that, everybody burst into applause.

The lesson themes for the month of January were Winter and Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday. The writer's workshop took place twice a week. The teacher told the children the subject about which they must write. The children would then

begin drawing pictures and/or pretend writing. These activities were done in color. The teacher and the aides would sit opposite each child and record what they spoke about the pictures and/or pretend writing. The highlight of the workshop was each child sitting in the author's chair and sharing their writing story with the other children. In the beginning of the year, the children demonstrated their writing ability by drawing or pretend writing. As they progressed they were able to write one or two words, then more words with greater detail. At the present time a few of the children are writing.

The month of February was an extremely busy month. The lessons included activities about Ground Hog Day, Abraham Lincoln Holiday, Valentine's Day, and George Washington's Birthday Celebration. During this month the listening center was used very much by the children. There were many tapes and books to match about the holidays during the month of February. There was also many listening games placed on tape. One of the activities that the children loved to do was to dictate a story on tape. Later the aides would put in writing in a booklet form and give to the children to show their parents.

During the seventh month, the children enjoyed their new discoveries about their individual senses and the joys of Spring. The sense of smell was one of the most enjoyable events of the month. The teacher brougnt in oranges, kiwi

fruit, ugly fruit, Chinese lemon, etc. The children were fascinated at the fact that everyone had different likes and dislikes. The teacher then proceeded to demonstrate their likes and dislikes in art, music, language expression, reading, writing, play and family life. The family center, one of the areas most utilized during play, was then used to demonstrate how the sense of sight demonstrated great differences among families, especially when color came into play. The family center consisted of a kitchen and a playroom with furniture, dolls with dress-up clothing, and all types of toys and kitchen utensils. The color likes and dislikes were quite surprising to the children. Not one child agreed on the color he/she liked. To their amazement some children had no like or dislikes about color. At the end of the discussion the children all sat down and drew in color the kind of kitchen and family(play) room they would like to have.

The last month of the implementation process was the month of April. The purpose of the unit was to define the community, the child's importance in the community and to promote an awareness and appreciation of helpers in the community. During the month the hands-on-science center was used frequently. The children engaged in making maps of the community, making a doctor's bag, making a fireman's hat, making a police car and school bus out of cardboard. At various times of the month, a policeman came to the school to talk about crime prevention, the fireman came to the

school to speak about fire prevention, and Lilco (Long Island Lighting Company) brought a house to the school in order to demonstrate hands-on energy saving in the home.

During the nine months of implementation two of the targeted population left the District reducing the number involved to 18 students.

At the end of nine months the aides administered the six post-tests. The teacher tallied all the scores and compared them to the pre-test results.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

Objective one was measured by a comparison between the pre and post scores of the Concept about Print Survey. The specific objective stated that at the end of nine months the targeted population as a group and individually will increase their concepts about print by at least 10%. After viewing Table 5, it can be readily seen that as a group the targeted population increased their concepts about print from a group total of 160 (37%) to a high of 254 (59%), the group increase being 94 (22%). Individually the increase ranged from 3 (13%) to a high of 9 (38%), the average increase being 5.2 (22%). The median rank number was 2.5.

The second objective was measured by a comparison between the pre and post scores of the Letter Identification Survey. The specific objective stated that at the end of nine months the targeted population as a group and individually will increase their sound-letter identification strategies by at least 10%. Table 3 clearly demonstrated that the children as a group increased their sound-letter identification patterns from a group average of 497 (26%) to a high of 890 (46%), the average increase being 394 (17%). Individually, the increase ranged from 2 (2%) to a high of 51 (47%), the average being 21.89 (20%). The median rank number was 6.0.

One student (SIL) failed to achieve a 10% increase on the Letter Identification Survey.

The student entered the school without any knowledge of the English language. She also came from a totally different culture. She spent most of her school time adjusting to the new school environment and culture. It was the opinion of this writer that the monolingual child should be allowed to grow at her own pace. There was also some suspicion that her poor progress may be over and beyond linguistic. The student will be targeted for close monitoring next year in the first grade.

Objective three was measured by a comparison between the pre and post scores of the Ready to Read Survey. The specific objective stated that at the end of nine months the targeted population as a group and individually will increase their reading strategies by at least 10%. Looking at Table 6, it can be seen that as a group the children increased their reading strategies from a 14 (10%) group average to a high group average of 69 (49%), the group average increase being 53 (20%). Individually the increase ranged from 1 (.06%) to a high of 9 (60%), the average being 2.9 (19%). The median rank number was 4.0.

Both students (BAR) and (SIL) entered the school without any knowledge of English. Both students came directly from the country of Portugual. Student (BAR) has shown great progress during the year as the other test surveys

demonstrated. However, student (SIL) has shown poor progress. More time should be given to this student to mature and learn the English language. However, it should be kept in mind that her problem may be other than linguistic.

The fourth objective was measured by a comparison between the pre and post test scores of the Vocabulary Writing Survey. The specific objective stated that at the end of nine months the targeted population as a group and individually will increase their vocabulary writing ability by 10%. Table 4 clearly indicated that as a group the targeted population increased their vocabulary writing ability from a 112 (6%) group average to a high group average of 764 (43%), the group average increase being 652 (37%). Individually, the increase ranged from 7.0 (6%) to a high of 60 (56%), the average being 36.2 (37%). The median rank number was 8.2.

One student (PEN) failed to achieve a 10% increase on the Vocabulary Writing Survey.

Student (PEN) demonstrated slow progress during the Kindergarten year. Much individual attention was focused on him. The student needed much help in understanding directions clearly in preparation for independent seat-work. The teacher noted that he enjoyed repetitive and monotonous work. The teacher has targeted this boy for close educational monitoring next year in the first grade. If the student does not show progress next year, the teacher should refer

him for evaluation, classification, placement, and supportive services if needed.

Objective five was measured by a comparison between the pre and post scores of the Teacher-Made Reading Observation Survey. The specific objective stated that at the end of nine months the targeted population as a group and individually will increase the amount and quality of reading time by 10%. Upon viewing Table 7, it can be readily observed that as a group, the targeted population increased the amount and quality of their reading time from a group total of 85 (14%) to a high of 351 (61%), the group increase being 269 (47%). Individually the increase ranged from 9.0 (28%) to a high of 20 (63%), the average increase being 14.9 (7%). The median rank number was 4.5.

The sixth objective was measured by a comparison between the pre and post test scores of the Teacher-Made Writing Observation Survey. The specific objective stated that at the end of nine months the targeted population as a group and individually will increase the amount and quality of writing time by 10%. A close look at Table 8 clearly demonstrated that as a group the children increased the amount and quality of writing time from a group total of 96 (21%) to a high of 295 (66%), the total increase being 199 (44%). Individually the increase ranged from 6.0 (24%) to a high of 16.0 (64%), the average increase being 11.1 (44%). The median rank number was 5.0.

Table 3. Letter-Sound Identification Survey Increase Results Among Kindergarten Children.

Name	Pre-Test No.	Post-Test No.	No. Increase	Perc.	Rank
AMS	0	51	51	47%	1
BAR	1	17	17	16%	9
CAL	50	62	12	11%	11
CHA	0	31	31	29%	3
CRO	38	50	12	23%	4
DUS	40	46	6	11%	11
EGN	34	54	20	19%	7
HOL	23	48	25	23%	4
JON	11	32	21	20%	6
KIR	76	108	32	30%	2
MCA	40	64	24	22%	5
MED	14	45	31	29%	3
PEN	7	23	16	15%	10
SIL	0	2	2*	2%*	12
VET	74	107	33	31%	4
WAN	33	52	19	17%	8
WEB	33	51	18	16%	9
WHA	23	55	32	30%	2
Group Total	497	890	394	391	
Average Increase	27.61	49.44	21.89	22%	

* Not Significant

Table 4. The Vocabulary Writing Survey Increase Results Among Kindergarten Children.

Name	Pre-Test No.	Post-Test No.	No. Increase	Perc.	Rank
AMS	0	23	23	23%	13
BAR	0	16	16	16%	15
CAL	4	35	31	32%	10
CHA	0	22	22	22%	14
CRO	5	42	37	38%	7
DUS	0	33	33	34%	9
EGN	5	40	35	36%	8
HOL	9	51	42	43%	4
JON	0	60	60	61%	2
KIR	22	98	76	78%	1
MCA	12	71	59	60%	3
MED	22	63	41	42%	5
PEN	0	7	7*	7%*	16
SIL	0	26	26	27%	11
VET	12	50	38	39%	6
WAN	5	64	59	60%	3
WEB	16	39	23	23%	13
WHA	0	24	24	24%	12
Group Total	112	764	652	665	
Group Average	6.2	42.4	36.2	37%	

* Not Significant

Table 5. Concepts about Print Survey Increase Results Among Kindergarten Children.

Name	Pre-Test No.	Post-Test No.	No. Increase	Perc.	Rank
AMS	8	12	4	17%	4
BAR	6	10	4	17%	4
CAL	13	16	3	13%	5
CHA	10	16	6	25%	3
CRO	11	14	3	13%	5
DUS	5	12	7	29%	2
EGN	9	13	4	17%	4
HOL	11	15	4	17%	4
JON	4	13	9	38%	1
KIR	20	24	4	17%	4
MCA	12	16	4	17%	4
MED	8	14	6	25%	3
PEN	3	12	9	38%	1
SIL	4	8	4	17%	4
VET	11	17	6	25%	3
WAN	8	15	7	29%	2
WEB	11	14	3	13%	5
WHA	6	13	7	29%	2
Group Total	160	254	94	396	
Group Average	8.9	14.1	5.2	22%	

Table 6. Ready to Read Survey Increase Results Among Kindergarten Children

Name	Pre-Test No.	Post Test No.	No. Increase	Perc.	Rank
AMS	0	3	3	20%	5
BAR	0	1	1*	7%*	7
CAL	1	6	5	33%	3
CHA	0	2	2	13%	6
CRO	1	3	2	13%	6
DUS	0	2	2	13%	6
EGN	1	3	2	13%	6
HOL	1	4	3	20%	5
JON	0	2	2	13%	6
KIR	6	15	9	60%	1
MCA	2	5	3	20%	5
MED	1	4	3	20%	5
PEN	0	2	2	13%	6
SIL	0	0	0*	0*	8
VET	2	8	6	40%	2
WAN	0	4	4	27%	4
WEB	1	3	2	13%	6
WHA	0	2	2	13%	6
Group Total	14	69	53	352	
Group Average	.77	3.8	2.9	20%	

* Not Significant

Table 7. Teacher-Made Reading Observation Survey Increase Results Among Kindergarten Children.

Name	Pre-Test No.	Post-Test No.	No. Increase	Perc.	Rank
AMS	3	16	13	41%	5
BAR	3	15	12	38%	6
CAL	7	27	20	63%	2
CHA	3	17	14	47%	4
CRO	4	19	15	47%	4
DUS	3	15	12	38%	6
EGN	4	16	12	38%	6
HOL	6	25	19	59%	3
JON	3	13	10	31%	8
KIR	8	32	24	77%	1
MCA	8	28	20	63%	2
MED	4	19	15	47%	4
PEN	3	14	11	34%	7
SIL	3	12	9	28%	9
VET	7	27	20	63%	2
WAN	3	16	13	41%	5
WEB	6	25	19	59%	3
WHA	4	15	11	34%	7
Group Average	85(14%)	351(61%)	269	848	
Individual Average	4.7	19.5	14.9	47%	

Table 8. Teacher-Made Writing Observation Survey Increase Results Among Kindergarten Children.

Name	Pre-Test No.	Post-Test No.	No. Increase	Perc.	Rank
AMS	3	16	13	52%	5
BAR	3	14	11	44%	7
CAL	4	15	11	44%	7
CHA	3	15	12	48%	6
CRO	4	16	12	48%	6
DUS	4	15	11	44%	7
EGN	4	15	11	44%	7
HOL	4	17	13	52%	5
JON	3	19	16	64%	1
KIR	16	25	9	36%	8
MCA	8	19	11	44%	7
MED	9	16	7	28%	9
PEN	4	13	9	36%	8
SIL	3	17	14	56%	3
VET	9	16	7	28%	9
WAN	4	19	15	60%	2
WEB	8	14	6	24%	10
WHA	3	14	11	44%	7
Group Total	96(21%)	295(66%)	199(44%)	796	
Individual Average	5.3	16.39	11.1(44%)	44%	

The results were positive. All of the children participated in everyone of the many activities. The writer was especially pleased with the social interaction that took place between the students, the teacher, the parents, and the school staff. At the end of the implementation process the targeted students had developed more sophisticated learning strategies in the areas of concept about print, sound-letter relationships, vocabulary writing, reading, and the amount and quality time used in reading and writing activities not seen at the beginning.

A rather consistent pattern of significant results was obtained through the use of child-centered activities. The writer noted that all of the children did not want to skip school even when they were sick. On at least 10 or 11 occasions the teacher had to send the children to the nurse because of sickness. The parents informed the teacher that they did not feel well but did not want to miss school. All of the parents commented that their children enjoyed school so much that they were willing to go to school even when they were sick. Children who come to school with this kind of enthusiasm and desire to participate had no difficulty acquiring new learning strategies. During all of these activities the teacher constantly observed the various behaviors of the children and at the same time applied the necessary assistance to develop good learning patterns necessary in the literacy process.

The writer's style of teaching was based on Piaget's findings about cognitive development. The curriculum of child-centered activities necessitated a cooperative approach where the teacher, the parents, and the children worked together to plan hands-on activities and carried them out. This whole-child philosophy necessitated constant communication with the parents through meetings and especially through the many newsletters. During all of the activities the teacher weaved language, reading, and writing examples in such a way that the children discovered new educational patterns and sought out other ways to learn more. The teacher noticed that as the implementation proceeded, children progressed at their own pace, they took more risks, they were not afraid to explore and even to make mistakes, and felt at ease in doing independent work activities. None of the children felt pressured to conform to certain academic standards. They saw the classroom as an extension of their own home environment. The student and the parents felt that they played an important role in the literacy development of their children.

Rasinski (1989) stated that parents were not blank slates. They knew their children and the environment in which they live. Parents should be informed participants in the language, reading, and writing activities of the school. The way in which the parents of this practicum participated and the favorable reactions of the children demonstrated how important parent empowerment should be viewed by the educa-

tional establishment. An example of parent empowerment was seen at the beginning of the practicum. The teacher noted that one of the students was intimidating the other children. She was a physically big girl for her age with very little control over her behavior. She would push the children, steal their food, and even bite them if they did not do what she said. On one occasion, when the writer attempted to restrain her from taking a toy from one of the children, she attempted to bite her and did however succeed in scratching the writer's leg. A meeting was held between the principal, the teacher, and the grandparent who had guardianship while the child's mother served time for a drug related crime. An agreement was made between the teacher and the grandparent in which the grandparent would sit in the classroom for one half an hour each day for one week, two days of the second week, and thereafter randomly until the child learned to adjust to the classroom rules and regulations. At the end of the month, the child's behavior changed completely. The student later informed this writer that she was the only person to whom she would listen and follow her directions.

The positive results of the practicum strongly suggested that the path toward awareness of reading, writing, and language development was within the child and the action taken by the student. The child was the creator of awareness not the teacher. The teacher was a facilitator, a guide for directing and encouraging the child to seek new

learning strategies. Children learn to read or write in a variety of different ways. In this practicum the children needed and were given the opportunity to act on print and become increasingly independent. As they read, they created occasions for noticing more things about print. The discrimination of new features was facilitated by the teacher's style and procedures involved in the child-centered activities.

Conclusions

The practicum demonstrated that the effectiveness of child-centered activities based on reading recovery principles was closely related to the participation of the parents, the teacher, and the students in the Kindergarten curriculum. Participation of the parents increased motivation and interest among all of the students, especially evident during the VIP week of the month. The accumulative effect of the VIP week of each month was extremely impressive. Parent participation projected to the children the importance of developing their oral language, reading, and writing strategies. The parents truly became positive dynamic educational role models among their children.

The close observation by the teacher of the child's weaknesses as well as his strengths was a positive factor for developing important learning patterns. This required the teacher to observe precisely what the children were saying and doing. In order to accomplish the objective the

teacher utilized tasks that were close to the learning activities of the classroom. During the observation, the teacher focused on what the children were able to learn rather than on what they were unable to perform successfully. Thus, the teacher was able to discover various ways to assist the child shift from the less adequate behavior to a more adequate response.

The practicum writer observed many changes of learning behavior in oral language, and in the early strategies of reading and writing. Early intervention took place while the child was in the process of learning the early stages of reading and writing. The intervention took place prior to the emotional impact and confusion of failure. The teacher observed that the children were able to handle frustration because it was not looked upon as a failure but a challenge. The children were encouranged to explore links between the items thus establishing new discoveries to old knowledge. The children operated on print as Piaget's children operated on problems, and searched for relationships. Early intervention in this practicum prevented many deficits in the learning process and the consequential emotional impact on the child's personality. More than anything else, the child discovered that learning can be fun and that teachers were wonderful helpers.

Child-centered activities were chosen as the primary instructional medium because they were action-oriented. The

approach was based upon the premise that children were active learners. The results of this practicum proved the premise to be correct. The children demonstrated high enthusiasm because of the hands-on-tasks. The classroom was a center of much activity. Oral language communication among the students and teacher was constant as they worked at their perspective tasks. As they interacted with others, with books, and with writing materials they brought their own meaning to the books they read and to the writing or drawings they accomplished. The teacher provided choices, opportunities, and support, but the child did the work and solved the problems.

Literacy instruction in schools have a powerful effect on children's developing concepts about the printed word, the development of oral language, and the children's discovery of the reading-writing connection. This was especially true for the at-risk children in the practicum. The teacher had to be very careful to demonstrate to the children that words or letters have meanings attached to them. The ability to read a word was not to be viewed as an isolated activity separate from the word meaning. Approximately four of the targeted children were considered as at-risk students. The teacher had to give them the support they needed in order to focus on details of print without losing the meaning of the context. The at-risk children of this practicum did not know how to use what they already knew to make sense of reading or writing. They needed special experiences to help

them develop an implicit understanding of the entire range of information that they must utilize in the reading and writing processes.

Finally, the results of the practicum demonstrated that reading and writing were interconnected, reciprocal processes. The teaching of reading and writing in the Kindergarten went hand in hand. The writer noted that as the children read and wrote, they made the connections that formed the basic understanding of both processes. The teacher also noted that the few at-risk children needed more opportunities for exploring and relating the two processes. The instructor was supportive and permitted these children many opportunities to make the reading and writing connection.

Recommendation

The writer has six specific recommendations based upon the results of the practicum. First, child-centered activities should be established in such a way as to permit full participation by the children. Children should be in small groups, talking and helping each other. The teacher should be the facilitator, structurer, and guide. Children and teacher should move around the classroom as they complete their activities and talk with each other. Second, the language, reading and writing strategies should be integrated in such a manner as to demonstrate to the children their usefulness in everyday life. Thirdly, children should be encouraged to retell stories. This approach will engage

them in holistic comprehension and organizational thought. It will permit them to mesh their own experiences into the retelling. Through storybook reading with story retelling, the children learn to introduce the story with its setting, explain its theme, and give its conclusion. Just as reading and writing are related so are reading and oral story retelling. Fourth, standardized testing should be minimized and informal/observational methods should be maximized. Greater insight into children's reading and writing patterns can be gained by paying close attention to the successful strategies he/she has learned to date. Fifth, the teaching of oral language, reading and writing strategies should be a shared experience between the parents, the teachers, and the child. Children need adults for encouragement and assistance as long as the adults do not take over the activity. Adults who share the writing task provide a model of correctness without ever having to talk about it to the child. Lastly, parents should become involved in the learning process at the classroom level. Cooperation can only take place if the parents are permitted to become informed participants and decision makers along with the teaching staff. Rather then making the suggestions, teachers might ask parents how the classroom instruction could be modified to make it more meaningful to the students. Again, the teachers may ask parents what they could and would be willing to do at home to improve their children's oral

language, reading and writing. Special and specific invitations need to be sent to fathers to participate fully in the oral language, reading and writing lives of their children.

Dissemination

The results of the practicum were shared with the writer's colleagues, interested parents, and administration. The writer made the practicum available to other school districts that expressed interest in the project.

One school district in particular was extremely interested in the total practicum implementation process. This district has a very large Kindergarten population. They had noticed in the past five years a high increase in children with reading and writing problems. When they heard about the writer's Kindergarten practicum they immediately asked for an interview. The writer has already set up a date for a small seminar with the Kindergarten administrator and directors of the school district.

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Appendix A

Teacher-Made Observation Reading Survey

Teacher-Made Observation Record
For
Self-Directed Reading Activity

Student Name_____

Kindergarten children need an enviornment in which they can explore and experiment with reading activities. Rather than controlling children's learning process, the teacher needs to stimulate it by providing the opportunity for self-directed activity.

Administration:

The teacher will observe students for a period of 15 minutes in self-directed reading activity. The observation will take place in the classroom setting. The students will be instructed to devote their time in any way they choose as long as reading takes place.

Scoring:

1. The child looks at front of book right side up._____1
2. The child reads book from front to back._____1
3. The child's eyes follow page in left to right progression._____1
4. The child reads page from top to bottom._____1
5. The child reads letters._____1
6. The child reads words._____1
7. The child reads sentences._____1
8. The child shares book with another student._____1
9. The child tells another student about the book._____1
10. The amount of time child devotes to reading._____15
    (1 point for each minute of reading)
11. The number of books child is able to read from beginning to end._____8

Total Score_____ Maximum score_____32

Appendix B

Teacher-Made Observation Writing Survey

Teacher-Made Observation Record
For
Self-Directed Writing Activity

Student Name_____

Children can and should express their own ideas through writing activity. They should be permitted to draw or write their own ideas. Research stresses the importance of children choosing their own writing topics. The writings of children follow a system of rules made up by the child.

Administration:

The Teacher will observe the students for a period of 15 minutes in self-directed writing activity. The students will be instructed to devote their time in any way they choose as long as writing takes place. The teacher may instruct the students in the following manner: "You may draw. You may write your name, letters, or words."

Scoring:

1. The child writes in left to right progression._____1
2. The child writes from top of page to bottom._____1
3. The child is able to hold pencil correctly._____1
4. The child is able to draw._____1
5. The child is able to scribble._____1
6. The child produces letter-like forms._____1
7. The child produces invented or conventional spelling._____1
8. The child pretends to write._____1
9. The child shares writing production with another student._____1
10. The child tells another student what he or she wrote._____1
11. The amount of time child spends in writing._____15
(1 point for each minute child writes)

Total score_____ Maximum score_____25

Appendix C

Parent Questionnaire Survey

Parent Questionnaire

1. Does your child like books?

2. Does your child spend at least ½ hour a day looking at/or reading books?

3. Does your child like to go to the Library?

4. Do you as a Parent like to read?

5. Do you as a Parent spend at least one hour a day reading?

6. Do you read to your child?

7. Do you tell your child stories?

8. Do you speak another language?

9. Does your child like to tell stories?

10. Does your child imitate you by reading to other children?

11. Do both you and your spouse work?